• Article at Khan Academy
• Influenced by Japanese Woodblock prints
• One of hundreds during this two-year period
• The word “la coiffure” evokes a precise image, one of wealthy women in glamorous settings. The ritual of grooming, dressing, and preparing one’s hair from the seventeenth and eighteenth century court days of Anne of Austria and Marie Antoinette was passed down to nineteenth-century ideals of femininity and beauty.
• the woman in Cassatt’s print is tending to her hair alone. Perhaps what we are seeing is a working woman getting ready to start her day. The counterpoint of the print’s title and the reality of its subject matter characterizes the ironic tension within the image
• also influenced by The Grande Odalisque
• The curve of the woman’s sloping back and neck echoes the curves of the chair which stand in contrast to the vertical lines of the mirror—a compositional counterpoint that further enhances the tension within the tight composition. The limited color palette of shades of rose, brown, and white, enables us to focus closely on the form and clarity of line. It also mimics the quality of pastels, which Cassatt, like her friend Edgar Degas, often liked to use. Through the process of the drypoint and aquatint etching, La Coiffure combines Cassatt’s propensity for hazy
shading and soft tones with a bold sharpness in line allowing the artist to integrate the qualities of two disparate media.

- Her desire to emulate the haziness, sensual, and suggestive possibilities of pastels is what motivated Cassatt not to use woodblock printing but intaglio.

- Cassatt’s motivation in making the prints was to make her art more accessible for a large audience. She believed that everyone, regardless of income or social position, should be able to experience art and to own works they enjoy.
Kitagawa Utamaro, *Takashima Ohisa Using Two Mirrors to Observe Her Coiffure*, c. 1795, woodblock print, ink and color on paper, 36.3 x 25 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814, oil on canvas, 36" x 63" / 91 x 162 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)